



Interested in Starting a P-Patch?



The Department of Neighborhoods P-Patch Community Gardening Program, in conjunction with the not-for-profit P-Patch Trust, provides 68 community gardens for residents throughout Seattle. We will be adding another 4+ gardens in 2009. The community based program areas of the P-Patch Program are [community gardening](#), [market gardening](#), [youth gardening](#), and [community food security](#) in the City of Seattle. These programs serve all residents of Seattle with an emphasis on low-income and immigrant populations and youth. Our community gardens offer 1900 plots and serve more than 3800 urban gardeners on 23 acres of land.

P-Patch community gardeners contribute to their communities in many ways, including growing and donating fresh organic produce to Seattle food banks and meal programs. P-Patch gardeners donated 12.3 tons in 2008. Supporting a strong environmental ethic, the P-Patch Program allows organic gardening only. Since all P-Patch community gardens are maintained by community members, we have an 8 hour annual volunteer requirement for participants to care for the common spaces within the gardens. Due to high demand, there are maximum square foot requirements at most sites.

Why not take a weedy vacant space in your neighborhood and use it to

Build Community
Provide Recreation and a Connection to the Environment
Celebrate Natural cycles
Increase Public Openspace
Reduce Stress and Crime
Educate Children
Increase Food Security and Enjoy Healthier/Better Tasting Produce
Share Food

And

Grow carrots, beets, corn, tomatoes, lettuces, radishes, potatoes, zinnias, currants, sunflowers, daisies, roses, pumpkins and zucchini like crazy?

Introduction

What is a community garden? A community garden is a space where you and your neighbors come together to steward (plan, plant, and maintain) a piece of public open space. *A community garden becomes an inspiring project: a gathering point which continues to strengthen networks through cooperative ventures; a source of pride among residents; a visible product of land stewardship and improved environment.* Traditionally community gardens in Seattle include individual gardening plots that community members rent. Common areas in the garden are maintained by all who garden individual plots in the garden. All care and maintenance in P-Patch community gardens is done by the gardeners. In addition to the standard community garden model described above, the P-Patch program allows for a collective model which does not have individual plots. The whole garden (not just the common areas) is designed, planted, maintained, and harvested together by community members that sign-on to work the community garden. We hope this booklet will help you better understand how to develop a P-Patch community garden in your own neighborhood.

What is a P-Patch?

P-Patch is the name given to community gardens in Seattle that are managed by the City of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods, P-Patch Community Gardening Program. P-Patch community gardens places for the whole community. Members practice organic gardening techniques and plant a mix of food crops, flowers, herbs, fruiting bushes & trees.

Starting a New P-Patch Community Garden

Look for a garden site: Land

Seek land that is vacant (city owned land, church property, un-used parking lots, hospitals, etc.) You will be creating a community-stewarded open space as a resource for the whole community. A great document outlining land for potential development into community gardens can be found at:

http://www.seattle.gov/Neighborhoods/ppatch/pubs/MHORST_GROWINGGREEN.pdf

Site Considerations

- **Size-** Minimum size depends on what is available. At a minimum, sufficient gardening space is needed to attract enough people to create a critical mass of gardeners who will be able to sustain the garden. In most medium density areas, 2000 square feet will be sufficient to accommodate several gardeners and a common area with space for a tool shed and compost bins. In low density areas, 5000 square feet may be a minimum. In high density area alternatives exist. In these areas we will work with your group to find alternative gardening opportunities. Examples include collective gardens (gardening together and sharing the harvest), alley space or sidewalk landscape gardens, or exploring shade loving edibles in your community garden by coming together to create a permaculture (permanent agriculture) garden.
- **Terrain-** The lot should be reasonably flat. If it slopes, the grade should not be so steep that level beds could not be created, for example with terracing. There should also be access for delivery of materials.
- **Sun-** The site should get sun most of the day, and therefore should not have buildings or trees on the south, east or west. Adjacent property should not be zoned for high rise buildings. In some high density neighborhoods, where open space is at a premium but interest in community gardening is high, we will work with groups to creatively find alternative gardening opportunities. An example is a group exploring shade loving edibles and coming together to create a permaculture community garden, collectively maintaining it, and sharing the harvest.
- **Location-** The site should be on a relatively quiet street to guard against interference from traffic, crowds, or noise. If near a busy street, there should be ways to shield or screen the site.
- **Neighbors and Neighborhood Support-** Ideally, the site should be observable by nearby residents. The scrutiny of neighbors adds to security. Invite the neighbors to get involved from the start so they feel invested in the garden.

P-Patch Program staff can help evaluate your proposed site. If it is a suitable location, the P-Patch Program can help you access the land. If the land is publicly owned they will work with the relevant government agency. If privately owned, they will try and negotiate a lease of at least 5 years. If purchase is the only possibility, the program along with the **P-Patch Trust** (not for profit group that promotes community gardening in Seattle) can work with community groups to apply for sources of money, such as private foundations, or public money available for open space. **Soil testing**, especially for lead levels, is a key step.

Even if your desired property does not become a P-Patch, your group can still create its own community garden. There are many independently run gardens in Seattle and the staff of the P-Patch Program can offer advice on creating your own.

People the most important element in any community garden

Outreach-Gathering together potential gardeners

Talk to your neighbors and adjacent property owners about choice of sites and the design of the garden once a site is chosen. The garden should reflect all members of your neighborhood. Though it takes some extra time up front, trying different types of outreach in your neighborhood will make your garden stronger in the long run. The P-Patch program can help you with flyers and translation as you go through the process. Here are some tips for engaging beyond your circle of friends to include your larger neighborhood.

Some steps to start outreach:

- Door to Door and word of mouth
- Calling people on waiting lists for existing P-Patches. The P-Patch program will make those names and numbers available.
- Survey the neighborhood
- Hold a meeting
- Attend and share information at local fairs, festivals, and other neighborhood events

- Meet with groups already functioning in the neighborhood (community councils, neighborhood clubs, church groups, informal clubs, etc.)
- Advertise in neighborhood papers, on local radio stations, with community councils, bulletin boards, mailings, and put a sign on the lot telling people about the future garden.
- Hold an event at the garden site and invite the whole community to join in
- Remember to outreach to youth, seniors, and immigrant populations in your neighborhood

Outreach does not have to be hard or complicated. Think of it as learning more about your neighborhood and who your neighbors are. The more gardeners that are involved with the P-Patch, the more successful the P-Patch will be. Your outreach efforts today can help to sustain your P-Patch community garden for years to come.

Contact the P-Patch Program for more information

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